

Urban Flood Awareness Act, Update 1-2015

The Urban Flood Awareness Act (PA 098-0858) was signed into law on August 4, 2014. The Act asks for a report, by June 30, 2015, that gathers information about Urban Flooding in Illinois. It defines Urban Flooding as flooding not in undeveloped or agricultural areas where water enters a building through wall openings, floor connections, through seams and cracks, or accumulation of water on public property or rights of way. This is a broad definition that includes many types of flooding. We are focused on flooding that is not flooding connected overland from a creek or river. It is flooding not mapped on FEMA NFIP maps.

The different requests for information in Section 10 of the Act can be divided into logical groups. Subsection 1 requires defining the prevalence, cost, and trends of urban flooding in the state. Subsections 2, 3, and 4 request the factors impacting urban flooding including; climate change, county stormwater programs, and stormwater policies. Subsection 5 asks about the existing technologies to determine risk for Urban Flooding, possibly mapping to show properties that are subject to urban flooding. Subsection 6 requests the strategies we can use to fix and fund the problem, with a focus on rapid, low cost approaches. Subsection 7 requires a primer on the differences in criteria between IDNR, IEMA, and DECO for funding flood control projects. Subsections 8 and 9 ask for strategies to increase participation in existing programs such as the NFIP and CRS, and to increase the availability, affordability and effectiveness of flood insurance and basement back up insurance.

The study is funded through grants from the Capital Development Board and FEMA. The grant from CDB can be used on any part of the Act. The grant from FEMA through the Community Assistance Program is for evaluating existing county stormwater programs and policies, technologies used to address urban flooding, and to update the state model stormwater ordinance. Kickoff meetings were held on October 7th and 8th. We are collecting data for the report from many sources and groups and the Illinois State Water Survey (SWS) received approximately 120 responses to a standardized survey from local municipalities. IDNR is writing the report Subsection 7 that details funding criteria differences between IDNR, IEMA, and DCEO. Molly O'Toole & Associates is tasked with Subsection 8 that deals with NFIP and CRS participation. Ms. O'Toole is the managing consultant for the FEMA NFIP's CRS and has worked in one capacity or another with the CRS since its creation. Bruce Bender Consulting Services, Inc. is tasked with Subsection 9 that deals with availability and affordability of flood insurance and basement back-up insurance. Mr. Bender serves as Chairman of the National Flood Insurance Committee and has closely worked with communities across the nation to increase availability and effectiveness of flood insurance and flood protection products. The SWS is undertaking data analysis for the remaining Subsections and report generation duties. The data will be analyzed and processed through February then we will have a meeting to discuss the results. The SWS will then have a draft of the report ready for another meeting around the first of May. Report review and finalization is required by the June 30, 2015 deadline.